

AMENDMENT

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A composition of matter consisting essentially of an isolated polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

2. (Currently Amended) The composition of claim 2, further comprising a carrier.

3. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising packaging material and, contained within the packaging material, a polypeptide consisting essentially of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

4. (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 3 wherein the packaging material comprises a label that indicates that the polypeptide can be used for the identification of *Ehrlichia* infection in a mammal.

5. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the label indicates that identification of an *Ehrlichia* infection is done using a method of detecting presence of antibodies to *Ehrlichia* comprising:

(a) contacting a polypeptide consisting essentially of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a phenotypically silent amino acid substitution variant of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody, with a test sample suspected of comprising antibodies to *Ehrlichia*, under conditions that allow polypeptide/antibody complexes to form; and

(b) detecting polypeptide/antibody complexes;

wherein the detection of polypeptide/antibody complexes is an indication that an *Ehrlichia* infection is present.

6. (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the *Ehrlichia* infection is caused by *Ehrlichia canis* or *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*.

7. (Currently Amended) A composition of matter consisting essentially of an isolated polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

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8. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising packaging material and, contained within the packaging material, a polypeptide consisting essentially of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant thereof that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody.

9. (Currently Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 4, wherein the label indicates that identification of an *Ehrlichia* infection is done using a method of detecting presence of antibodies to *Ehrlichia* comprising:

(a) contacting a polypeptide consisting essentially of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 or a conservative amino acid substitution variant of the polypeptide shown in SEQ ID NO:2 that specifically binds to an anti-*Ehrlichia* antibody, with a test sample suspected of comprising antibodies to *Ehrlichia*, under conditions that allow polypeptide/antibody complexes to form; and

(b) detecting polypeptide/antibody complexes; wherein the detection of polypeptide/antibody complexes is an indication that an *Ehrlichia* infection is present.